

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *ONE SECOND AFTER*

**WILLIAM R.
FORSTCHEN**

ONE YEAR AFTER

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—STEPHEN COONTS, *New York Times* bestselling
author of *Saucer: Savage Planet*

A NOVEL

William R. Forstchen



ONE YEAR AFTER

A TOM DOHERTY ASSOCIATES BOOK



New York

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For Congressman Roscoe Bartlett and Dr. Richard Pry, who first sounded the warning about EMP. And for the real “Franklin Clan,” who have become a true blessing in my life.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When *One Second After* was released early in 2009, I never anticipated all that would follow. I had actually started thinking about a book regarding the threat of an EMP attack back in 2004, after a congressional committee, chaired by Congressman Roscoe Bartlett, released a report on EMP that should have served as a wake-up call to the nation; a report that the media, and therefore the general public, ignored. In a conversation with that remarkable, brilliant gentleman, he lamented that the core problem was that the issue of a catastrophic “first-strike attack,” using an EMP against the continental United States by a nation such as Iran, North Korea, or a terrorist group backed by them, sounded like science fiction, and therefore it lacked a public constituency to demand a more robust foreign policy and defensive preparedness. Bartlett and others asked if I could write a “fact-based” novel about the threat to try to raise public awareness.

It took a year for the idea to even begin to jell. For the longest time my thinking ran along the classic (no offense intended) “Clancy-esque” model of a hero racing to stop the disaster. And then it was the students at my college and my daughter who created the inspiration. I am blessed to teach at Montreat College (yes, it is a real school) where, with a student body of five hundred, a professor forms close bonds with his students across four years. Graduation day, therefore, is a special moment, filled with both pride and poignancy as one sees “their kids” moving on. It was yet another graduation day, yet another speaker droning on ... I was looking at “my kids,” politely listening to the speaker, but obviously eager to get on with things, and then it

struck me—what would happen to them if, at this moment, America was hit with an EMP strike? What would happen to my college, my beloved small town of Black Mountain, to my daughter, to all of us? Two hours later I was at the keyboard and began to write the story that became *One Second After*.

It wasn't until 2009 that the book was published. (Rather amusing that a number of major houses rejected it, to the delight of my publisher and editor who did pick it up, and see it turned into a *New York Times* bestseller.) At the time of its release, I had no idea what was about to happen. I was actually attending a conference about EMP out in Albuquerque with my good friend Captain Bill Sanders, who wrote the technical afterword for the book, when my agent called with the news that we had hit the best-seller list. I was flabbergasted, and there is no other word for it.

The full impact really didn't hit until several months later. I wasn't even aware, at the time I was writing the book, that there was an emerging movement of people who called themselves "preppers." A couple in a nearby community had started a business, "Carolina Readiness Supply," and asked if I'd come speak at a conference they were organizing. "How many do you expect to be there?" I asked and they replied around a hundred or so. On the day I arrived, that wonderful couple was standing in a jammed parking lot to greet me, and I found myself facing an audience of more than five hundred, some coming from as far as Atlanta and Charlotte. Something was definitely happening!

And thus it has been in the years afterward. Some say that I was a driving force in the creation of the prepper movement, but I beg to differ. Maybe my book helped to serve, but the movement was already "a-forming." Tens of millions of Americans were again thinking as Americans, that planning for self-reliance *before* a disaster hits is a smart move. For those new to the concept of "prepping," I do have to forcefully say, ignore how mainstream media too often portray such people in absurd television programs. Nearly without exception I have found preppers to be decent, honest folks who think not only of themselves but also of their neighbors, community, and nation as well. If "the stuff" ever does "hit the fan," pray that your neighbors are preppers. And a major thank-you here for the thousands of preppers I have met. All I can say is thank you for your friendship.

As this book goes to print, it has been more than six years since *One Second After* was released. Much has changed but, frustratingly, much is still the same. I had hoped that by now there would have been government action at the national level to better secure our power grid, create plans both for defense and for public preparedness, and a more robust foreign policy that makes clear that the acquisition by rogue nations of a weapon that could generate an EMP will NEVER be tolerated. None of this has happened. The historian in me recalls the 1930s. We watched passively as the threats grew, which exploded into our nation's life on December 7, 1941. We are asleep again, while North Korea tests nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, Iran is not far behind, and ISIS, a movement as brutal and psychotic as Nazism, emerges.

It had never been my intention to write a sequel to *One Second After*, but wherever I spoke that was always a question: What happens next? I resisted for five years; my publisher, Tom Doherty, and his senior editor Bob Gleason dropping major "hints" that they wanted more. During those years I did give them a book which I truly enjoyed writing, offering a positive vision of our future in space, and also a couple of books about the Civil War and the American Revolution with my good friend Newt Gingrich, and then a self-published book about the threat of ISIS. Finally, I could no longer say no and decided to pick up the narrative thread of what happens to John Matherson, his family, his village, and his college. Thus this book, and a third one to follow several months after this publication to round out the story.

This is supposed to be a preface and an acknowledgments page, and it is time I get into that. I feel like someone at an award's ceremony who is admonished to keep it to a minute or less, but has a list ten minutes long! So here goes:

Special thanks to Newt Gingrich, Roscoe Bartlett, and others who have, for decades, worked the political front of this issue. In an age of such bitter partisan infighting, how I wish both sides of the aisle, both houses of Congress, and the executive would realize that this is a national threat that if not addressed, will indeed result in a government in exile in some underground bunker far outside the ruins of D.C., struggling and perhaps fumbling to put the pieces back together again, like Humpty Dumpty's horsemen and soldiers.

As always, my special thanks to Tom Doherty, Bob Gleason, and the wonderful team at Tor/Forge. As a fledgling writer thirty years ago, when I first met Tom Doherty, I hoped that someday I could actually be part of “his team.” We’ve done half a dozen books together, and there is no one else in this business I hold in higher regard. On the business side as well, eternal gratitude to my agent, Eleanor Wood; my film agent, Josh Morris; the ASCOT media publicity team and my near daily contact there with Monica Foster. A book is a team effort.

When I first showed a draft of the book to my college president, Dan Struble, he asked why I just didn’t name things for real rather than give fictional names for my town and college. Thank you, Dan, for that suggestion. It gives a “real place” to the books that otherwise would be lacking. I am blessed to be living in Black Mountain, North Carolina, (yes, a real place!) and Montreat College. The permission to use the real names helped me with the writing and apparently has helped many a reader to have personal association with the story as well. Most of the names in the books are fictional, but some are real, and those “real” characters are drawn on how I see them as my friends. I hope they take delight rather than offense.

And finally, a very personal acknowledgment: A couple of years ago, I was speaking at a prepper conference and afterward signing books. Robin Shoemaker stepped up to the table, there was eye contact ... and well ... that once in a lifetime moment hit. I think the line in *The Godfather* is that we were hit by the “Sicilian Lightning Bolt.” The best reward of my life for writing a book.

It’s time to close this acknowledgments and get on with the tale. If you are like me, I tend to skip the acknowledgments stuff. It is usually a lot of names I don’t recognize and definitely not the reason I purchased the book in the first place! But since my publisher is paying for the ink and paper, at least for old-fashioned printing rather than electronic, I do feel compelled to close with one final thought. The books are fiction, but the scenario could be real. It might very well be real. Our parents and grandparents of the “Greatest Generation” allowed their leaders to close their eyes to the growing threats around the world saying “it will never touch us here,” and a terrible price was paid. History has a hundred such examples. Do we read this as a novel or as a warning? If it is a warning, do we act or fall back upon

“someone else will make sure this doesn’t happen?” I pray that thirty years hence, these books are forgotten as dark tales of warning that never came true. If so, I will be happy and content for my daughter and grandchildren. I pray that I never one day hear, “Bill, you were right.”

That, my friends, is undoubtedly up to you. The issue is in our hands to, as Abraham Lincoln once said, “nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope on earth.”

[William R. Forstchen](#)

Black Mountain, North Carolina

September 2015

PROLOGUE

730 DAYS SINCE “THE DAY”

This is BBC News. It's 3:00 a.m., Greenwich War Time, and this is the news for today.

This day marks the second anniversary of the start of the war that saw the detonation of three EMP weapons over the continental United States, another off the coast of Japan, and a fifth weapon believed to have veered off course and detonated over Eastern Europe. The effects of this attack—never fully confirmed but believed to have been an act between Iranian-supported terrorists and North Korea—continue to reverberate around the world. It is estimated that upwards of 80 percent of all Americans, and more than half the population of Japan, Eastern Europe, and what had been western Russia and the Ukraine have died as a result. China has been seen as the new superpower in the wake of the attack, with significant Chinese forces, defined as humanitarian, now occupying the West Coast of the United States and Japan. Western Europe and our own United Kingdom, though spared the direct results of the attack, are still feeling the profound economic impact as the world attempts to reestablish economic and political balance. In south Asia, intense fighting continues in the wake of a limited nuclear exchange between Pakistan and India.

The second anniversary of what most now call “the Day” was commemorated today by the king, who attended a memorial service at Westminster Abbey. After the service, a renewed pledge was made by the

prime minister to help our European neighbors with their rebuilding efforts and to extend continued aid to the United States.

More on that memorial service and the lasting impact of the Day, but first, this report from the provisional government of the United States capitol at Bluemont, Virginia. The administration's announcement two weeks ago of the mobilization of a million men and women for the Americans' Army of National Recovery, or ANR, is now in full swing with draft notices having been sent out in a move unprecedented since the Second World War. The majority of America's armed forces, which were based overseas on the day of the attack, have now been deployed to the western and southern borders to contain further expansion by foreign powers.

Therefore, the purpose of this Army of National Recovery, according to the administration, was reiterated today: to establish security in those regions within the United States still ruled by lawlessness, to restore domestic tranquility, to aid in reconstruction, and—when necessary—to augment the military presence along those borders claimed to be in dispute. Our panel of experts will discuss the implications of the creation of this new military force within the United States later in the hour.

And this message for our friends in Montreal: "The chair is against the door." I repeat, "The chair is against the door."

Now for other news from around the world ...

CHAPTER ONE

DAY 730

“Daddy, I’ve been drafted.”

John Matherson, who had endured so many shocks in life, sighed, wearily sat back in his office chair, and looked up at his daughter Elizabeth. Elizabeth’s eyes revealed an aging far beyond her eighteen years, as did the eyes of nearly all of her generation. As a boy, John would gaze at the photo books about World War II; how hard it was to believe that the “old men” in the pictures really were just eighteen and nineteen ... their eyes, however, revealed the inner torment of all that they had endured, features haunted and remote. They were no longer kids that should still be in high school or freshmen in college ... they had aged a lifetime, often within a matter of days, and as one author described them, they were “forever aged far beyond their precious years of youth.”

“Sit down, sweetheart.” He sighed, motioning to the far side of his desk in the town hall of Black Mountain, North Carolina, of what he hoped was still the United States of America. His desk was piled high with all the paperwork he had to deal with as the town administrator, all of it handwritten or punched out on an old Underwood typewriter.

In the terrible months after the Day, he had finally taken on something of a dictatorial position under martial law. As some semblance of stability finally returned within the last year, he gladly surrendered those powers back to a town council. Regardless of the loss of electricity and a national infrastructure, one thing did appear to hang on—paperwork—and as town administrator, he was stuck with the job. He often looked longingly at the

dead computer in the corner of his office, a relic of a bygone world that now simply gathered dust, just as the Underwood typewriter—half forgotten in a closet for years—had before their world was turned upside down.

His former hyperclean world of daily or twice-daily showers on hot summer days, starched white shirts with clean collars, and dress shoes instead of worn boots had been replaced by once-a-week baths in a kitchen basin on Saturday night with a once-weekly, slightly bloody shave using a straight razor scavenged from an antique store to prepare for church on Sunday. Clothes were washed by hand in the creek that trickled down behind his house, and the collars of all his shirts were beginning to fray and were permanently stained with grit and sweat.

John's brave new world had a grimy, battered edge to it. As a historian, he used to wonder what life 150 years earlier actually did smell like, look like, feel like. He was living it now, where a crowded room during a meeting on a warm spring evening had a distinctive musky, gamy smell to it, and folks who once wore jackets and ties or neatly pressed dresses now showed up in worn jeans and wrinkled, faded shirts. Sunday was the one day of the week when people did try to scrub up, though unless someone in the household was handy with an old-fashioned needle and thread, most wore suits and dresses several sizes too big. Their appearance made him think of the old daguerreotypes of a bygone era. It was rare to see someone overweight in those old photographs. Most had a lean, sinewy look, and their clothing, on close examination—except for the wealthy—a well-worn look.

His office in the town hall had that same worn feel to it. Gone were the scents of antiseptic scrubbing and buffing, brilliant fluorescent lights on day and night, fresh coffee from a machine that would take a dollar bill, air-conditioning in summer, and electric heat in winter. All of it gone ever since the Day.

Elizabeth still struggled to maintain some semblance of freshness with a semiclean college T-shirt and jeans and a red ribbon tied to her dark, nearly black ponytail. Her wiry frame was typical of everyone, her jeans belted tightly around her narrow waist. What little extra weight she had put on when carrying Ben a year ago was long gone

She put a crumpled piece of paper onto his desk and pushed it across to him. He opened it up and spread it out, quietly rubbing his jaw.

He, like everyone else, had heard rumors about an impending draft to be issued by a remote and seldom-heard-from national government that had evacuated Washington, D.C., and now functioned out of an old Cold War bunker system in northern Virginia. The vague rumors had become true with this single sheet of paper his only surviving daughter placed on his desk.

He looked up at her again. She was eighteen, had seen war and starvation, and was already a mother, the father of her child killed in the fight against the invading Posse that had attacked their community a year and a half earlier. In so many ways, she did look like those long-ago photographs of eighteen-year-old veterans of Normandy and Iwo Jima, aged far beyond their years. But this was his daughter, his only child. He could still see the face of the newborn, the eyes of her long-deceased mother, the eyes that would well up with tears when she came for comfort for a skinned knee, the sparkling eyes of a laughing twelve-year-old, the knowing gaze of a sixteen-year-old who knew that with a glance and a smile she could still con her “daddy.” Like all parents who across the years had gazed into the eyes of their children, whom the government suddenly declared were old enough to fight and to die, his heart was filled with fear. They were taking *his* child away, most likely never to return.

He gazed at the paper while motioning again for her to sit down.

As she settled into the chair by the side of the desk she offered a gesture a bit uncharacteristic since she had grown up—reaching out to take his hand while he gazed down at the letter.

“Greetings, Fellow Citizen, and by order of the President of the United States of America...”

The president?

The president of the United States. He still thought at times of the one who was in office on the Day. No. Word was that the White House had received some forewarning of the attack, scrambled the president out of D.C. aboard Air Force One ... but amazingly, the plane was not sufficiently “hardened,” against a high-level EMP and went down somewhere over West Virginia. The president now? There was actually some debate; a junior senator out west claiming he was the legitimate successor, but most, especially survivors in the east, acknowledging a junior cabinet member headquartered in Bluemont, Virginia. The letter was the standard formula,

reminiscent of draft letters of long-ago conflicts, ending with the forceful statement that she was to report to the office of the “federal administrator” in the Buncombe County Courthouse within three days for induction into the Army of National Recovery—or face the full penalty of the law.

He finished it and then quickly reread it. He was tired after having sat through a night rotation of watch duty, and he rubbed his eyes as he looked at Elizabeth, who sat across from him. No tears on her face, no hysteria, no reaction.

The federal administrator in Asheville. That must be this new official, Dale Fredericks, who had moved into Asheville a month or so earlier to replace the full battalion of regular army troops, which had quartered there over the previous winter but were then ordered to move out and head for Texas.

John found the regular army unit to be of tremendous help with attempting to reorganize the region, opening up some lines of communication with radio gear brought back from overseas deployment, their technicians even helped local ham radio operators to fix their equipment and establish some semblance of a network. They had been helpful as well with at least containing some of the raider groups known collectively as reivers, an old Scot/Irish term for outlaws.

As the army pulled out, some administrative replacements arrived via helicopter from Charleston, South Carolina. A printed notice had arrived for John from the postal courier from Asheville, announcing their arrival and that in the near future he would be contacted along with other community leaders for a meeting to discuss reorganizing the communities of western North Carolina. This was welcoming news given the continued trouble with border raiders from north of the Mount Mitchell range, who were calling themselves reivers, but after that notice, nothing else ... until today.

And now, this first notice of reestablishing the entity that all spoke of with pride and nostalgia—the United States of America—had come as a draft notice from some distant entity to take his Elizabeth away. *I’ve lost one child*, he thought. *Dear God, not another.*

His thoughts drifted to Jennifer, Elizabeth’s younger sister who had died when the so-taken-for-granted medical supply system of America had collapsed and insulin was no longer available. For want of a few vials of

insulin, his youngest had died in his arms. That was part of his life he blocked off to keep his sanity. No parent should ever have to bury his child, but he had. He kept his gaze on Elizabeth even as he hid his thoughts about Jennifer, attempting to maintain a calm, even exterior.

He looked at her, trying to collect his thoughts. *I'm her father. This is my eighteen-year-old daughter who should still be a kid, not a young mother about to be drafted.* He shook his head and then forced a reassuring smile and tossed the document back across the table.

"Ridiculous. You're a mother of a fourteen-month-old baby. That's always been a draft deferment."

"Not anymore, Daddy. You didn't read it carefully," she replied, taking the letter from his hand and turning it over. In this age of paper shortages, the document was printed on both sides, front and back. He had actually forgotten to turn the single sheet of paper over to read the addendum.

"By executive order during this national emergency," she read in a flat, emotionless monotone, "all prior grounds of deferment have, as of this date, been waived, except for demonstration of severe physical disability. Those mobilized with dependent children must find suitable placement for their dependents. Failure to do so will result in punishment as outlined in Emergency Executive Order 303."

He reread the line and it chilled him. He remembered hearing about Order 303. It gave a government official the right to invoke capital punishment. He had executed people in the months after the Day, starting with the two drug thieves, with no executive orders other than the decision of the town to support such draconian measures during a time when the survival of the town was at stake. He had wrestled with those decisions then; he still did in his nightmares. As he looked up at his daughter, though, the irony did strike him that she was subject to such, as well.

She handed the page back to him.

"This came in with the morning mail from Asheville?" he asked.

"Yup, and I'm not the only one. Mabel at the post office said there were notices for 113 with the overnight post from Asheville."

"You sure of that—113?"

"Yes, Daddy." There was now a slight touch of a scared girl in her voice. "I ran up here to tell you. A crowd is already gathering at the post office, and

they are definitely not happy.”

He took that in, stood up, and went out the door to the next room where the town’s telephone operator was on duty.

“Jim, would you patch me in to Mabel?” he asked, and then he returned to his office and picked up his old-style phone.

A retro 1930s telephone switchboard, taken from the local museum down on State Street, had been rigged up in the town hall. “Long distance,” as it was once called, now meant a call to Asheville to the west and Old Fort to the east, though there was talk that Morganton, forty miles off, had managed to pull together enough copper wire to run a line to them. His phone jangled a ring familiar from his childhood, and he picked it up.

“United States Post Office. Mabel Parsons speaking.”

He smiled. She held to the old rituals even though she was the only one who ever worked at the post office, which, beyond its old traditional service, had become something of the town center for news and gossip.

“John Matherson here. How you doing, Mabel? Your husband feeling better?”

“He stabilized out yesterday afternoon, John; thanks for pushing through that request for antibiotics. We really owe you one.”

“Sure, Mabel. The kids at the college are starting to turn out a surplus in their chemistry lab, so no problem.”

“So why are you calling, John? Certainly not to check on George’s health.”

He could sense the challenge in her voice. Mabel was not someone to mince words with.

“Okay, Mabel. My daughter Elizabeth just walked up here from your office with this draft notice thing. Said a whole bunch of them came in with the Asheville mail delivery. What the hell is going on?”

“I sorted through 113 of them, John. You know I’m not supposed to discuss other people’s mail. Old post office pledge and all that. But, yup, I’m sticking them in the mailboxes right now. I think it’s okay to tell you that it looks like half the notices are for kids still living up at the college; the rest are from town who are being called into this ANR thing.”

“I’ll be right down,” John replied and hung up without waiting for a reply. Again he glanced toward his daughter. He was supposed to be the arbitrator and leader for the entire community, but at that moment, regardless of his

overall responsibilities and long years of training and service in the military, the issue in his heart was about his daughter, his one remaining child, a mother herself. It was about his blood, his child, the way any parent would react.

He rubbed the stubble on his chin. It was Saturday morning. Tonight, his wife, Makala, would shave him with an old-fashioned straight razor, an art he had never mastered. Perhaps it was her years as a senior nurse in a cardiology unit that gave her confidence with a blade. Throw-away safety razors were indeed a thing of the past.

After a long night of watch duty, he felt grubby and unkempt, and beyond that, his jaw ached from the damned tooth that had started troubling him the month before. Makala had at last talked him into enduring a dreaded visit to the town dentist later and then a bath in the creek and a good shave afterward, followed by relaxation on his day off from duty. But all that had to wait as he looked at Elizabeth.

“Come on, kiddo, let’s get going.”

“Can I drive, Daddy?” Elizabeth asked as they left his office, holding out her hand and offering a smile, the sight of which warmed his heart. A touch of the old days of a teenage daughter conning a father with a smile as she requested the family car.

The 1958 Edsel, once the proud possession of his mother-in-law, had become the highly recognizable official car for John Matherson. It was increasingly a source of guilt, as well. Having moved to Montreat after his home was destroyed during the battle with the Posse, he now lived two and a half miles from the town office. At times, especially on beautiful spring and autumn days, he enjoyed the walk. After all, there was a time when for anything less than several miles, everyone walked until the advent of the auto. But more than once while he took his time walking to the town hall, taking an hour each way, something serious that needed his immediate attention had transpired. So after much official wrangling and arguing, the town council insisted he accept a ration of five gallons of gasoline a week, enough for seventy-five miles.

There was still a reserve of a couple thousand gallons in the underground tank for city vehicles, carefully doled out. As for gas taken from abandoned cars, it was increasingly useless, breaking down over time, though the town’s

Volkswagen man, Jim Bartlett, claimed he was developing a formula to make that fuel useable.

Having the Edsel strictly for business use was a luxury that still hit his guilt nerve, and whenever he did see someone walking in or out of town, he'd pull over to give a lift to assuage that guilt.

"We're walking, Elizabeth. It is exactly half a block from here to the post office." He set off with a long-legged stride befitting his six-foot-five frame, glad to breathe in the morning air after a long night's watch in the town hall. While heading out, he told Jim where he would be and asked him to tell Reverend Black, who was coming on duty, that the night had passed quietly for once.

There had been rumors that the Mount Mitchell border reivers were again prowling along the northern edge of his community. The Stepp families, who lived up along the edge of the towering mountains, were complaining constantly about missing chickens and hogs ... though of course they were mum about their moonshining operations and surreptitious trading with those same reivers that at times degenerated into violence. At times, he didn't know if he should be blaming the Stepps rather than the outsiders. But at least this night had passed without incident or vendetta raids.

Leaving the parking lot of the town hall complex of administrative offices, fire department, and police station behind, John and Elizabeth crossed State Street, which had once been a main thoroughfare. The ice storm of the winter before had finally taken down the darkened traffic light. The bank across the street, long abandoned, had burned the year before, the once-prosperous building now an empty shell. The chamber of commerce and visitors' center for tourists on the other corner ironically was still intact, though the thousands of brochures advertising local attractions had of course been looted out for basic fundamental use. A roll of the original material that the brochures had replaced was worth far more than its weight in silver or the standard medium of exchange—ammunition. It was yet another one of those things hardly anyone thought to stockpile before things went down.

As soon as they crossed the street, he regretted the decision to come down here. About 150 years earlier, the village post office was the